



A Guide to Child Support Services for Relative Caregivers

Are you taking care of someone else's child?

The DSHS Division of Child Support (DCS)
wants you to know what we can do to help you.



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

1-800-442-KIDS

www1.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/index.shtml

How we can help...

If you are taking care of someone else's child, the DSHS Division of Child Support (DCS) wants you to know how we might be able to help you.

DCS can:

- Establish paternity.
- Establish and enforce child support orders.
- Modify child support orders.

Even though the child may be living with you, the parents are still financially responsible for their child. You can be eligible for DCS services in a number of different situations:

- If you receive TANF or medical benefits for the child in your household, you will automatically receive DCS services.
- Children in foster care automatically receive DCS services as well.
- If for some reason you feel that DCS services might be harmful either to you or the child, you can claim "good cause," which may stop DCS services while you still receive public assistance benefits for the child.
- If you are not receiving public assistance benefits for the child, you can apply for "nonassistance" services from DCS.
- If there's an existing support order for the child in your household, circumstances may have changed enough that the support order should be changed. We can help with that, too.

If you want more information, please contact us in one of the following ways:

Call **1-800-442-KIDS** to find your local DCS office

Call **1-800-457-6202** to talk to the DCS Community Relations Unit

Look us up on the internet: **<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/services.shtml>**

What kinds of services does DCS provide?

DCS establishes paternity, determining the child's legal father:

This helps provide a medical history but can also lead to other possible benefits for the child such as Social Security or other dependent benefits. (This can help the child's parent, because under Washington law, most dependent benefits paid on behalf of a parent are credited as child support payments.)

DCS collects child support:

DCS can enforce an existing child support order (such as a divorce decree) or establish a support order if needed. DCS sets support obligations based on a parent's ability to pay, and can help modify a support order if the parent's situation has changed.

DCS enforces medical support:

DCS will attempt to have the parents cover the child on their own medical insurance, if available.



What happens if I get TANF and/or medical assistance?

When does DCS get involved in my case?

If you receive TANF or medical assistance, DCS automatically opens a child support case. We will attempt to establish and enforce a child support obligation against both parents of the child in your household.

What if I am afraid that DCS involvement will be dangerous for me or the child?

You can ask for “good cause” if you think DCS services could cause harm to you or the child in your care. Talk to your TANF/medical worker in the Community Services Office (CSO) or to your DCS worker about requesting good cause. If the CSO determines that the risk of harm is too great, DCS may not even open a child support case.

Will I get the child support directly when I receive TANF?

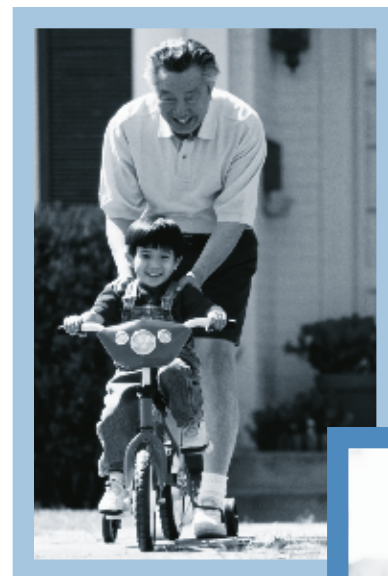
While you receive TANF, current child support payments go to reimburse the state. If the amount of monthly child support collected exceeds what you receive from TANF for at least two months in a row, your TANF grant will terminate and you will begin receiving the child support directly from DCS. After your TANF grant terminates, you will receive any current child support collected for periods when the child is still in your home.

What about when I receive medical assistance?

When you apply for medical assistance for the child in your home, you will automatically qualify for full child support enforcement services. DCS gives you any child support collected for the period when the child is with you. However, you may choose to waive your right to collect monetary child support, in which case DCS will simply enforce the parents' health insurance requirement for the child.

Does DCS require a child's parents to provide medical insurance when the child receives Medicaid?

When a child receives Medicaid or other medical assistance from the state, DCS attempts to have the parents provide health insurance coverage if it's available through the parent's employer or union. Depending on the terms of the child support order, DCS can also attempt to have the parents contribute to the cost of uninsured medical expenses.



What if the child is placed with me by DSHS for foster care?

The DSHS Children's Administration may place a child (your grandchild, nephew/niece, or someone else) with you as a foster child.

How does the Division of Child Support (DCS) get involved in my case?

Whenever a child is placed into foster care, federal law requires that a referral be sent to DCS to begin collecting child support and enforce medical insurance from the child's parents. DCS provides the same services described above for TANF cases.

What if I'm not a licensed foster home?

You may be told that the only financial help you can get is to apply for TANF or medical at your local Community Services Office (CSO). If you decide to apply for these benefits, see above. If you decide not to apply for TANF and decide not to become a licensed foster home, you can apply for DCS nonassistance services.

What if I am a licensed foster home or am working to become licensed?

You will receive financial and medical help from the Children's Administration. The amount you receive as a licensed foster home varies depending on your particular circumstances and the needs of the child. If you are a licensed foster care home, you will not be eligible to receive TANF or medical since the foster care system already provides that help.

As a licensed foster parent, will I get the child support directly?

No, in this case, child support goes to reimburse the state for the cost of foster care. If the child support exceeds the monthly cost of care, the excess is put in a trust fund to be used in the best interest of the child as determined by the Children's Administration. To find out more, ask your caseworker about the Office of Accounting Services (OAS) Trust Fund.

What if I think it would be better if DCS did not provide services?

Stopping DCS from collecting support is a process called "good cause," which for a child in foster care is based on "the best interests of the child." A good cause decision is based on a variety of factors which your social worker can explain to you.

There are some situations (not related to good cause) where child support can be reduced or temporarily suspended. These cases need to be resolved by the child's parents and the social worker or the DCS worker.



Can I get child support services if I don't apply for TANF or medical, or I am not a licensed foster home?

If you don't want to apply for TANF/Medical or become a licensed foster home, you can apply for and receive DCS services. We will ask you to sign a "Declaration of Lawful Custody," which is a form in which you swear that either you are the legal custodian of the child, or that you have the legal custodian's permission to care for the child.

What are some of the services DCS provides?

DCS will provide the same services described above:

1. Establishment of paternity
2. Establishment and collection of child support
3. Enforcement of medical support

Will I get the child support that DCS collects?

Yes. Any current support or back support collected will be sent to you. You can ask DCS to use electronic funds transfer (EFT) or the DCS Card instead of sending a check.

If I go on TANF or become a foster care provider later, will I have to pay money back to the state?

No. TANF or foster care payments are not debts you will eventually need to pay back. If you decide to get TANF or foster care, child support collected from the parents is used to repay that amount (described above).



What if I don't want DCS services?

You may decide that it's not in the best interests of you, the child, or the child's parents to pursue child support at this time. You can ask DCS to close your case and stop all actions at any time, for any reason. You can reopen your case later, if you wish. NOTE: If we have had to file a court action, the court will decide if you can close the case, or if the court case must continue against your wishes.

Where can I find out about DCS services?

To find out more or to get help collecting child support, establishing paternity or providing medical insurance call the Child Support Help Line at 1-800-457-6202 or visit the DCS website at <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/index.shtml>.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I want to find help for the child's parents?

Most relative placements involve grandparents taking care of their grandchildren because the parents are unable to do so. At the same time, you are still a parent to your own child and want to help him or her resolve issues such as unemployment, disability, chemical dependency or incarceration, which might prevent him or her from being able to parent.

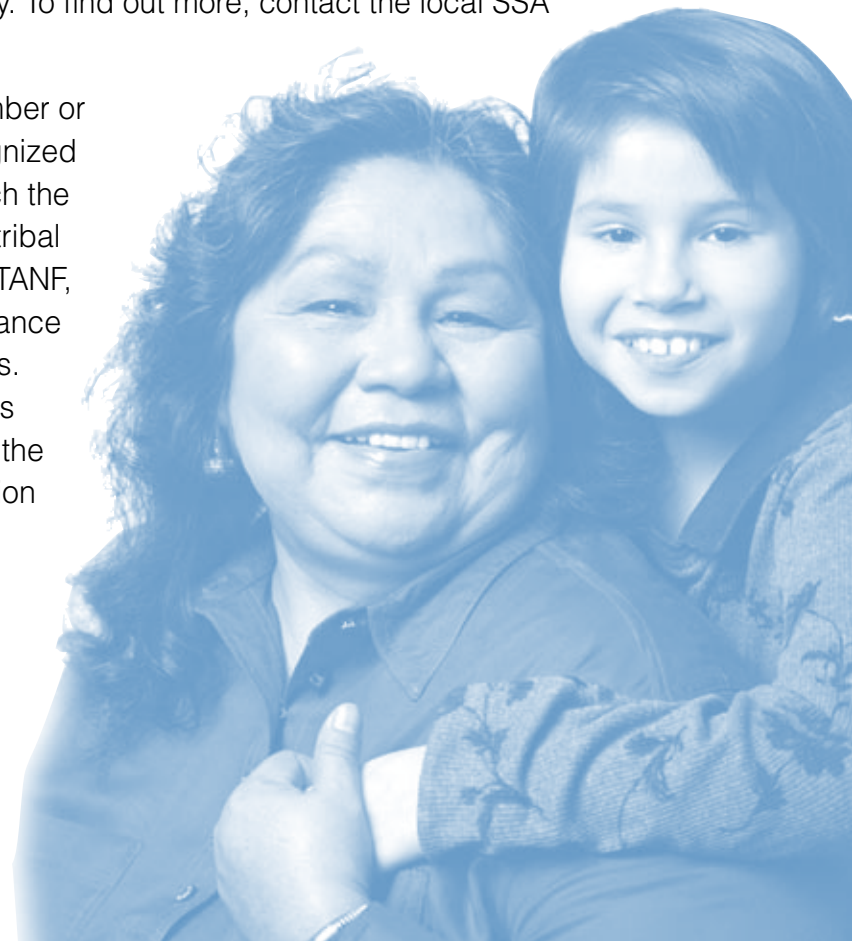
The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) offers many services through its divisions such as the Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (DASA), Mental Health Services, and WorkFirst (employment/jobs training).

DSHS is committed to a "No Wrong Door" policy where clients can find the service that best suits their needs and often at no cost. You or the child's parent can ask about this program at any DSHS agency or visit our website at www.dshs.wa.gov/basicneeds.

Are there other means of help besides going to DSHS?

The child you are caring for may be eligible for financial help from the Social Security Administration (SSA) at no cost to you. The child may qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or may be able to get dependent benefits from a disabled or deceased parent. There may also be Veterans Administration (VA) benefits for parents previously or currently in the military. To find out more, contact the local SSA or VA office listed in the phone book.

Also, if the child in your care is a tribal member or eligible for membership in a federally recognized Indian tribe, there are other benefits to which the child may be entitled. Many tribes operate tribal public assistance programs which include TANF, Education and Training, medical and substance abuse treatment, and child support services. To find out more about services and benefits available for your child, contact the tribe or the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Resource information is available at the DCS Tribal Website at <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/tribal>.



Useful DSHS resources and telephone numbers

DSHS Constituent Relations 1-800-737-0617

Children's Administration

Constituent Relations..... 1-800-723-4831

Children's Response Hotline 1-800-833-8185

CPS - Children's Protective Services

 ENDHARM hotline 1-866-363-4276

 Runaway hotline 1-800-486-9612

CWS - Children's Welfare Services

 Adoption hotline 1-800-562-5682

FRS - Family Reconciliation Services

 Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-562-6025

Economic Services Administration

CSD - Community Services Division

 Constituent Relations..... 1-800-865-7801

DCS - Division of Child Support

 Information..... 1-800-457-6202

JRA - Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration

 Information..... (360) 902-7804

HRSA – Health & Recovery Services Administration

Medical Assistance

 Customer Support Center..... 1-800-562-3022

MHD - Mental Health Division

 Information..... 1-888-713-6010

 Consumer Affairs..... 1-800-446-0259

Other Administrations

ADSA – Aging & Disability Services Administration

 Information 1-800-422-3263

DFI - Division of Fraud Investigations.....

 Fraud Hotline 1-800-562-6906

DASA - Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse

 Information..... 1-877-301-4557

DDD - Division of Developmental Disabilities

 Information..... (360) 902-8444

IPSS – Indian Policy & Support Services

 Information..... (360) 902-7819